

and regain control of the Caribbean islands. But yellow fever and the guerrilla tactics destroyed the first army in San Domingo. It was all but wiped out Napoleon in relief. That, too, was quickly cut and sorely in need of cash to finance Napoleon turned to negotiating with the French in Paris for the sale of the French America. In April 1803 the two parties



Jefferson, whose decision to buy Louisiana was a blatant assertion of executive power, had long been the butt of Federalist attacks like this — on the grounds that he favored limited Presidential authority.

a legitimate duty to examine the new lands. He was more than ready to do so. By the time the territory was transferred to United States ownership, Jefferson's secretary, young Captain Meriwether Lewis, had assembled all of the equipment for the Corps of Discovery, and his co-commander, Second Lieutenant William Clark, was already at the mouth of the Missouri, drilling the men and selecting additional baggage for the great trip into the hinterland. On March 9, 1804, Captain Lewis, dressed up in the best of his uniform coats for what would be the last time in more than

icans to carve a track across the West all the way to the Pacific; they were the pathfinders for a nation. In their wake would follow the mountain men, prospectors, cattlemen, sodbusters, tracklayers and city builders — the successive generations of an empire. When Jefferson noted in his message to Congress that the West was "not as well known as is . . . desirable" he was drastically understating the case. In truth, most of the trans-Mississippi territory remained, as French traders called it, *pays inconnu*, unknown land. The best maps Jefferson could obtain for the

The Louisiana Purchase Treaty of 1803 gave the United States the western Mississippi drainage, extending north to the British possessions and southwest to lands claimed by the Spanish. Although later exploration defined the watershed as shown above, in 1803 the western limits were unknown. However, it was as-

sumed, correctly, that the northwest boundary of Louisiana adjoined the unexplored Columbia River Basin or Oregon country, to which the U.S. held vague claim since the discovery of the river mouth in 1792 by an American fur ship. Together they would provide a broad land corridor to the Pacific.



